

In our October newsletter: Here to hear you:
Amplifying 'Ombuds' in October, help us redesign
our website, and more

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ONTARIO OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTER



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Every year in October, offices like ours around the world recognize Ombuds Day – an internationally observed opportunity to educate and raise awareness about the roles we play, the services we offer, and the value we provide.

This year, on October 10, we and hundreds of similar offices used the common theme – “Ombuds: Here to Hear You” – to illustrate how we make sure the voices of the public are heard as we resolve problems with provincial and local services or flag systemic issues that affect vulnerable populations.

Ombudsman Paul Dubé marked the day by thanking our team for their hard work, compassion and the kindness they show to the thousands of people who contact us every year.

“We will continue to work hard to make sure people are treated fairly by their government services,” he said. “And I and my peers around the world will remain vigilant and support strong, independent ombudsman institutions everywhere.”

This month also offered several important opportunities for ombudsmen to share expertise and strategies in tackling common problems:

- On October 16, Ombudsman Dubé joined colleagues from across the French-speaking world at the 12th annual conference of the [Association des Ombudsmans et Médiateurs de la Francophonie \(AOMF\)](#) in Quebec City. Ombudsman Dubé gave a presentation on the obstacles that our counterparts often face in protecting rights across the globe, and how implementing international standards – including the [UN Resolution on the Role of Ombudsman and mediator institutions](#) and the [European Commission's Venice Principles](#) – can help bolster the role of the ombudsman as an essential democratic institution.
- From October 22 to 24, we also participated in the biannual joint conference of the Federation of Canadian Ombudsman and Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons in Victoria, B.C., whose theme was “Ombuds on Edge: Tackling Challenges, Evolving Practices, Enduring Principles.”

Fittingly enough, October is also our anniversary month. Forty-nine years ago today – October 30, 1975 – Arthur Maloney was sworn in as the first Ombudsman of Ontario. Since then, our Office has helped hundreds of thousands of people resolve issues with public services, and our [systemic investigations](#) have sparked reforms that have benefited millions of Ontarians. [Read more about our work](#), and stay tuned for news about how we plan to mark our 50th anniversary next year!



Watch this short video to learn more about Ombuds Day!

[Speaking of services in French – at the municipal, provincial and federal levels](#)



French Language Services Commissioner Carl Bouchard was invited to speak to the City of Toronto's Francophone Affairs Advisory Committee on October 18 to explain his role in overseeing the application of the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)*.

Although the Commissioner's jurisdiction doesn't include municipalities (as the Ombudsman's does), it does include 21 organizations in Toronto that are designated to provide services in French under the *FLSA* (e.g., certain health and long-term care facilities and daycares), as well as services provided by the city on behalf of the province, such as Provincial Offences Courts, which handle matters like traffic violations.

The Commissioner gave examples of cases where our intervention has improved the services provided by such organizations, and encouraged Francophones to contact us if they have difficulty accessing provincial services in French, or questions about which organizations are designated.

On October 17 and 18, our French Language Services Unit staff, as well as Commissioner Bouchard, greeted Francophones from across the province in Ottawa at the annual conference of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario. The Commissioner spoke about the tangible improvements that our Office has seen in provincial services in French, thanks to our intervention. He noted that more and more French speakers are coming to us when they experience issues in obtaining provincial services in their language, and encouraged them to exercise their rights under the *FLSA*.

We also conducted a joint workshop with our federal counterparts from the Office of the

Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL), on the similarities and differences between our mandates as language commissioners. The session, entitled *Rôles et mandats des commissaires linguistiques*, was co-hosted by French Language Services Unit Manager Jean-François L'Heureux and Célestin Abedi from OCOL.

Dress Purple Day – Supporting vulnerable children, youth and families

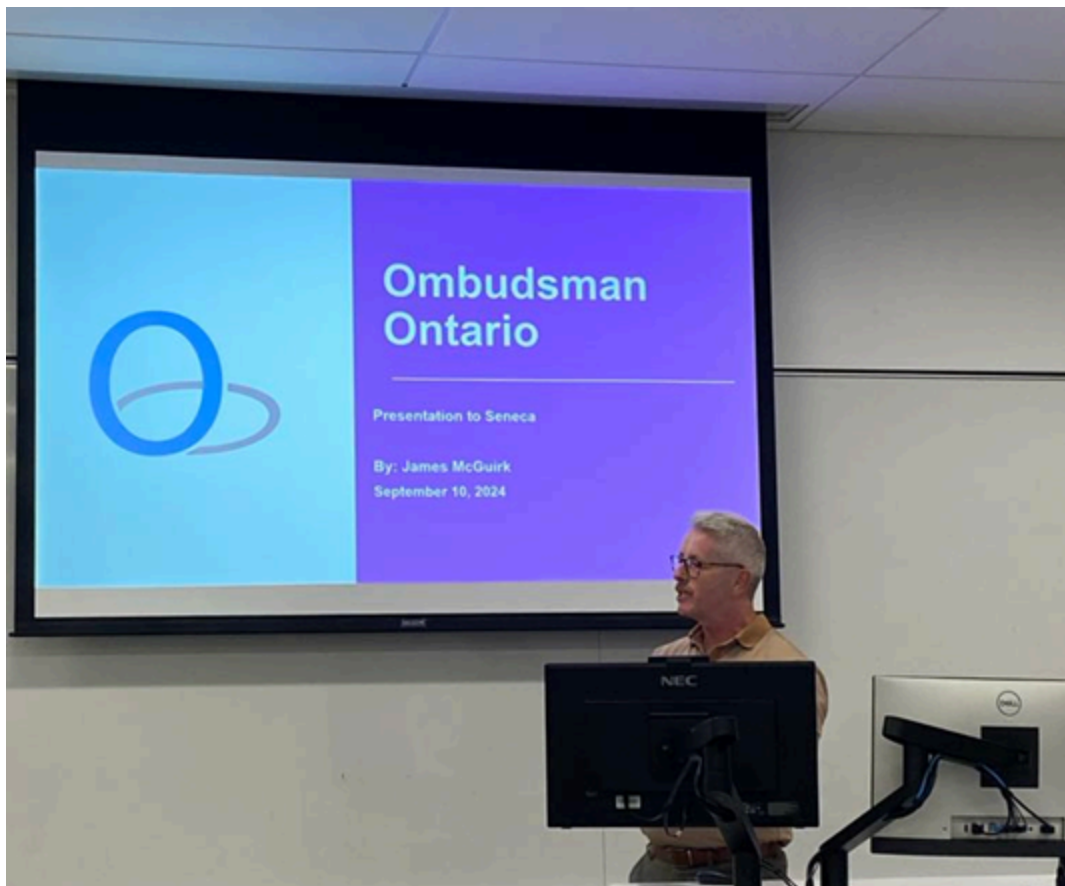


On October 25, our staff marked Dress Purple Day, a day to remind vulnerable families that no one is alone. This is an opportunity to make sure children, youth, and families know that there are resources and services available to help them. The Ombudsman also highlighted the work of our Children and Youth Unit who work to ensure that Ontario's children and youth have safe and equitable access to the services they deserve.

[Visit our website to learn more about the work of our Children and Youth Unit.](#)

Here, there and everywhere

Preparing the next generation of service providers



On October 1, James McGuirk, an investigator with our Children and Youth Unit, spoke to the Child and Youth Care Practice class at Seneca Polytechnic. He explained the role of our Office to the students, and how we help support those in care. He also distributed our [Answers for Service Providers brochure](#), which explains providers' responsibilities towards the young people in their care.

Connecting with youth in care



From October 7 to 8, members of our Children and Youth Unit visited several group homes run by Mary Homes, a privately owned residential program licensed under the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services in the Ottawa-Carleton region. Our staff engaged in an interactive game with the youth receiving services in the homes to help them better understand how we can help ensure their rights are respected.

On October 20, staff from our Children and Youth Unit attended Camp Lifting Leaves, a camp for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in care. Our staff met with more than 40 youth from 15 children's aid societies. They explained the role of our Office and facilitated activities to remind the youth of their rights while in care. In addition, staff took this opportunity to meet with the youth individually and hear their concerns.

Guiding principals

On October 19, Senior Counsel Robin Bates spoke to future school principals and other administrative leaders in the Supervisory Officers' Qualification Program (SOQP), about how our Office works collaboratively with school boards to resolve complaints and improve governance. Participants were led through several interactive case scenarios that outlined our complaint resolution process and collaborative work with school boards.

[Click here for more on our Office's oversight of public education in Ontario.](#)

How we help: Case summaries



Fairer treatment

A Francophone teen at a secure treatment centre run by a designated organization was having trouble accessing services in French, including in the classroom. He had made many written and oral requests to be transferred to the bilingual wing of the centre, but they were all refused. We approached the centre and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services about the issue.

RESULT: The teen was able to have a frank conversation with the centre's management and he appreciated being heard. He now knows which staff members are bilingual, so he can have access to better communication, and he is back in a French classroom where he can continue his studies.

Learn more about our French Language Services Unit, which answers questions and takes complaints about services in French



[Long-distance resolution](#)

A woman who had been living outside of Canada for 15 years sought our help in obtaining more than \$25,000 in child support through the Family Responsibility Office (FRO). When she left Ontario, she had asked the FRO to hold the payments for her as they accumulated, as it was easier for her to cash the cheque as a lump sum. She told us she had been trying to work with the FRO for a year to have the funds transferred, but was having difficulty communicating with her caseworker.

RESULT: After we stepped in, the FRO sent the woman a wire transfer for just over \$25,000, and also began taking steps to recuparate outstanding support that she was owed.

[Click here to learn more about how we helped Ontarians with their problems](#)



[Moving on](#)

A 15-year-old who had been living in a group home for three years wanted to move into a foster home where he could become more independent. He reached out to us for help. Our staff informed him about his right to request a placement review through the Residential Placement Advisory Committee, something he hadn't been aware of before.

RESULT: After our intervention, the youth requested the review, and his children's aid society worker initiated the process to make it happen.

[Click here to learn more about how we helped with issues or problems concerning children and youth](#)

[Our website – your thoughts?](#)

In the coming months, we're planning to redesign our website to make it easier for you to find the information you need! To help us create the best possible site for you, we invite you to take a moment to fill out this brief, anonymous, three-question survey. Your feedback is much appreciated!

SURVEY

Please do not include any confidential information in your responses; if you would like to make a complaint, [you can contact us directly](#).

Careers



We continue to hire new staff – and currently have openings for the following positions:

- [Indigenous Liaison Advisor](#)
- [Legal Counsel](#)
- [Bilingual Administrative Assistant, Communications](#)
- [Early Resolution Officer - General Unit \(12-month Contract\)](#)

We offer:

- Collaborative, exciting work with exceptional colleagues passionate about public service
- Comprehensive health, dental and vision benefits
- Generous paid maternity and parental leave
- Hybrid working environment with an office centrally located on the subway line
- A commitment to work-life balance
- Defined-benefit pension plan
- Ongoing training and professional development opportunities

APPLY NOW

File a complaint or contact us here



The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Ontario legislature who conducts oversight of provincial government agencies and municipalities, universities and school boards, as well as child protection services and French language services. The Ombudsman's investigations have benefited millions of Ontarians and prompted widespread reforms, including improved newborn screening, a more secure lottery system, and better tracking of inmates in segregation.

The Ontario Ombudsman's work takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across the province we now call Ontario, and we are thankful to be able to work and live on this land.

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